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LEO, A LION AMONG SHOWMEN



Merry Christmas,
Leo, from me to
your president,
Mr. Nicholas Schenck, and
all the officers of your
company, your directors,
your stars and play-
ers, your authors,

your cameramen, in fact your whole family!
You have had a grand year of grand pictures.

As my memory goes over the list, your successes appear so formidable in their number that I am afraid I can only mention a few of them.

In The Digest, issue of March 18th, 1933, I note this editorial, on "The Strange Interlude": "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer made a greater picture of 'The Strange Interlude' than Eugene O'Neil made of his play. O'Neil was handicapped by the Realm of Imagination, in presenting Imagination as an actor upon the stage.

"Imagination is the playboy of the screen, and that is why Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer was able to fulfill for O'Neil what the stage failed to do for him."

Again in an earlier issue, January 7th, 1933, I find in "Ray Presents", in connection with "The Strange Interlude", "the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film production is magnificent entertainment".

"Outstanding is the work of Norma Shearer as Nina. Too much praise cannot be lavished upon the artistry with which she develops this character from youth to old age, with all its interesting interludes."

The editorial comment continues in this vein and strain; and as I become reminiscent at this Yuletide of happy memories, "The Strange Interlude", projects itself continually upon the threshold of those visions which appear among "the good of 1933".



"GABRIEL Over the White House" was a brave theme which only a Lion would have had the strength to attempt to master. It introduced Walter Huston, the Canadian as its star, and this star in a role as President of the United States.

"Gabriel Over the White House" made a very strong impression upon me. It ascended to another plane, other than that which speaks about keeping your feet upon the earth. It entered the realm of spiritual forces, but compromised with this domain, by making such acceptance of the Etheric Mirror of Life, take on the complex of a hallucination.

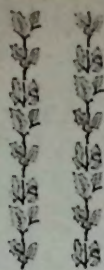
A president suffering from some disturbance of the brain as a result of a motor accident, which makes him imagine he is directed by a Guardian Angel, the Archangel Gabriel, into doing "divers and strange things". What this president of the United States did, by way of being a real ruler of his people, by way of giving them a square deal, is not nearly as strange as what President Roosevelt is doing in his New Deal.

I remember saying that I would like to take every politician, the mercenaries which fringe the hem of politics and those who wear the purple of state to see "Gabriel Over the White House". In looking over The Digest files May 13th, 1933, I read editorially, "'Gabriel Over the White House' is a thriller. The quality of a thriller which is as far apart from the general interpretation of thrillers as is the North Pole from the South Pole.

"It is the finest, the bravest, the most daring of films which the United States has ever produced, and it would even make Lenin sit up in his grave in admiration. As for the French republic, they would be inclined to move the Statue of Liberty from the Harbor of New York to the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios as a tribute to the greatest free speech ever made."

"Gabriel Over the White House" was not the box-office hit in all countries which was expected of it. When it was released, all countries were still speculating as to whether the Presi-

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Editorial

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dent of the United States would turn out as good as he talked. This was the query of the masses. The classes, which make up the five percent money-control, were wondering if he would turn out as dangerous to their policies as he talked.

Neither classes nor masses have been disappointed; he fulfilled his promises.

ANOTHER powerful picture of Leo the Lion, is "Rasputin and the Empress", with that great trio of artists of one family, John, Ethel and Lionel Barrymore. Turning the pages of our files again to April 8th, 1933, I find the following in the "Ray Presents" page:

"Leo is the kind of a Trademark which refused to keep its four feet on the ground, so Leo emitted a roar, got on his toes, assumed an attitude of a human being, and walked upright.

"Naturally a walking Lion, searching the heavens for stars, became one of the wonders of the world, and all eyes were turned upon Leo, as he made stars and yet more stars.

"When talking pictures appeared upon the Screen Horizon, this gave Leo an added inspiration, and he proceeded to illuminate his starry crown with stars who could talk, whose histrionic ability made Screen History.

"His most recent brainstorm was the presentation of the three Barrymores in "Rasputin and the Empress" and again Leo shows the Show World that when Leo has a brainstorm the heavens shower down shekels upon those exhibitors who have faith in Leo's showmanship.

"Rasputin and the Empress" was a fascinating picture. I can still see Ethel Barrymore as the Mother Empress. I can still visualize the tragedy of the finale which wiped out the dynasty of the Romanoffs. Leo made of this picture a gripping drama.



MARIE DRESSLER, I persist in calling the Queen of the Screen, God bless her merry soul and give her a Merry Christmas and a healthy New Year.

Her prosperity is secured by Leo the Lion, who would secure her health as firmly, if Leo had the power to give health as he has the power to give wealth.

"Tug-Boat Annie" appears before me, with Marie Dressler, as an old sea-salt, of the feminine gender, and Wallace Beery as her good-for-nothing, but good-for-something husband.

I remember seeing this picture for the first time at the Capitol, New York, and the crowds which lined up in front of the theatre to see this picture. I remember also that it was held over for a second week and that its receipts were even larger than expected. Both Dressler and Beery made real live characterizations emanate from their respective roles, and "Tug-Boat Annie" now becomes as much a part of Dressler-Beery and Leo the Lion, as it was originally a part of that magazine, the Saturday Evening Post, which presented the "Tug-Boat Annie" series.

"Eskimo" is another of M-G-M's masterpieces of the screen. "Eskimo" which sent its directors into the frozen regions of the far north for locale and players.

"Eskimo", that epic which Canada is still to see, but which has already been heralded by the press as one of the great pictures of the screen.



THEN there is "Dinner At Eight", even better than "Grand Hotel", both with their stars, and still more stars; "Dinner At Eight", in which Marie Dressler and

Jean Harlow, Wallace Beery each loom great. John Barrymore also has a role which I consider his best contribution to the screen since the first days of John Barrymore's best; Lionel also, and Billie Burke doing magnificently.

It is a picture which could not help but entertain, even the king and queen of lummoxes (the latter plural for lummo!).

No company has maintained a standard of picture values as has Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and I am very safe in stating that without Leo, a Lion among the showmen of our Industry, Christmas would not inspire exhibitors to feel so merry.





United Artists Kills "The Big Bad Wolf" of Depression



HE power of the Motion Picture Screen has curiously enough manifested itself in its own peculiar way; and it has taken a simple nursery rhyme, adapted for the screen by Walt Disney, to provide a symbol for the figure of Depression, as "The Big Bad Wolf", and its antidote "Who's Afraid?"

Many a man and woman, haggard with anxiety over general conditions, during an economic crisis without precedent in our civilization, has been inspired to a new courage and patience, even to laughter, at the defeat of "The Big Bad Wolf".

If there are any awards of Merit in the Industry for general service to mankind, Walt Disney should have a medal pinned upon him, for surely he is this year's Santa Claus of Good Cheer.

There is an old Hebraic saying which translated means, that even a hair from a pig can be utilized for service. Disney made a Santa Claus of "Three Little Pigs", carrying out the wisdom of the old Hebraic axiom in his three dancing and singing little pigs, who built their homes of materials which were typical of the character of humans.

It contains a moral which even a child could grasp. It also teaches what Christmas is intended to convey, namely the Brotherhood of Man, for did not one of the little pigs, who refused to dance and play, while he built his home solidly of brick, did he not take his spendthrift, shiftless brother-pigs into his home, thereby saving them from "The Big Bad Wolf", when the Beast was ready for its destructive attack? This little pig did not stop to argue whether the two little pigs deserved to be saved; and having saved them, he did not lecture them, but sang and danced with them, overjoyed at the destruction of "The Big Bad Wolf", and that he had been indeed that brother who had saved a brother in need.

The Screen has contributed many masterpieces of fiction, of pictorial beauty, pictures with sweeping and compelling lessons to mankind, but the choicest sermon of the Screen, the most delectable sugar-coated pill, is Disney's defeat of "The Big Bad Wolf" by the "Three Little Pigs".

The Twentieth Century Productions played a conspicuous part in the 1933 career of United Artists, and the British pictures from the studios of British and Dominion received a splendid representation by way of bookings across Canada.

The thought of Eddie Cantor, in "The Kid From Spain" furnished sufficient laughter to carry through a happy memory for a whole year until we laughed again at Cantor in "Roman Scandals". Thinking of Cantor always makes me think of beautiful women. When prizes are handed out, don't give one to Cantor because any man who has the "mazel" (luck) to have such beautiful women to play with as he had in "The Kid From Spain" and "Roman Scandals", has had enough good luck to satisfy any man, incidentally don't overlook the fact that Cantor's pictures have never gone off the gold standard.

—Editor.

Merry Christmas--Uncle Carl Laemmle!



WHEN you think of Christmas you cannot help but think of "Uncle Carl Laemmle", as this Industry of Motion Pictures affectionately calls the President of the Universal Pictures Company.

Uncle Carl Laemmle that pioneer and veteran of the Screen, who has for over a quarter of a century retained the admiration and love of those who have been associated with him directly, or through Motion Pictures.

Uncle Carl Laemmle who would do anyone a good turn if it were possible, and for whom thousands of exhibitors would also do a good turn.

Universal is among the pioneers which has demonstrated the theory of the "survival of the fittest". Its Motion Picture career started when Motion Pictures were only flickers and the word Industry was as far removed from Motion Pictures as from — from what? If I say Drama, we are only a step removed from this Art. If I say the Circus, the odour of the sawdust ring comes into my nostrils with the memory of our animal pictures, our clowns, etc., etc.

If I say finance, I think immediately of our array of financiers. If I say Industry, the image of our army of accessories whirls into view with its wheels within wheels. Therefore, I must recapitulate and say that Uncle Carl Laemmle and Universal started in Motion Pictures when it was as far removed from its present development as an "untouchable" of India is removed from a Brahmin. That's better!

And still Universal goes on keeping its Trademark in the front row of distribution. "Be Mine Tonight", released by Universal, was a delightful picture. Unusual in its beauty of scenic investiture as was "The Doomed Battalion", of an earlier season. Then there was the music and song of "Be Mine Tonight" which was gloriously appealing. There was romance and beauty, in all, Entertainment sufficient to please the most critical or indulgent of audiences.

Another Universal musical pleasure was "Moonlight and Pretzels", with its stunning chorus, its big numbers and breezy comedy.

"The Invisible Man" among the latest from Universal, out - Frankenstein's "Frankenstein", without this angle of horror. It thrills and mystifies, it petrifies and electrifies your imagination with the possibilities of its plot. It has entertainment value for the thinker and for the drifter. It represents the imagination of H. G. Wells, just as "Twenty Thousand Leagues" of Universal's tender years represented the imagination of Jules Verne. We have lived to see the submarine of Verne's imagination, who knows but that we, or our children, may live to see "The Invisible Man" of Well's imagery.

And now there is John Barrymore in "Counsellor-at-Law", soon to be released in Canada, and which will give Universal another opportunity to say to its public as it has proudly done in "Only Yesterday", "We have the honour to present 'Counsellor-at-Law' with John Barrymore." Barrymore has a great part in the "Counsellor-at-Law", who in performing a kindness to an innocent man, has this ghost of a past favour arise from its grave, menacing his present and future career.

I mention "Only Yesterday", but in the "Ray Presents" column of November 18th, I told you what I thought of "Only Yesterday". I have not yet recovered from the memory of the best and most enjoyable cry I have had in years, and which tearfall was inspired by "Only Yesterday". It was a pleasure to cry so hard. I cannot forget Margaret Sullavan. I will never forget her any more than I will ever forget Diana Wynyard in "Cavalcade", and Norma Shearer in "Smilin' Through". Perhaps I am sentimental. Who cares? After eighteen years in the Motion Picture Industry, it's a pleasure to be sentimental!

But here I am talking about how I feel, when my idea is to express affectionate regard for Uncle Carl Laemmle and Universal, but that is because I am sentimental about Universal also.

Merry Christmas, Uncle Carl Laemmle, and may you, your family, and Universal and its family live long and prosper!

—Editor.

Regal's Prosperous and Happy Year



REGAL must be feeling regal, if a regal array of pictures has anything to do with that majestic and superior feeling called regal.

First, you and I know that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer releases its pictures through Regal Films of Canada, in the Canadian territory.

You would imagine this is sufficient good luck for any one company, but when you think of the Gaumont-British and other British successes which Regal Films has had this past year, you can understand that it is not difficult for Regal to feel merry this Christmas.

I may as well start out with that wonder picture, "The Private Life of Henry VIII", which I consider the best picture of this year, if "Dinner At Eight" is classified with the coming 1933-34 product. Taking this "Dinner At Eight" away, here goes my year's crown to "Henry VIII", and regardless of any other picture that was made this year, or ever made, I crown Charles Laughton Monarch of the Screen's best individual performance.

After eighteen years, this year is my eighteenth birthday as editor of The Digest, and you are going to be invited to my "Staying in" party, somewhat different from a "Coming out" party, because in this business of ours the miracle and the inspiration for the party is when you "stay in" and not when you "come out".

But let us forget The Digest's Birthday Party of which you will hear later on. I thought of it only when the thought of crowning Charles Laughton as Monarch of this year's individual performances occurred to me. I thought of it because I heard someone among my good friend-knockers say, "Who is this Ray Lewis who presumes to crown players?" Gentlemen-knockers, and gentlemen-friends, countrymen, and friendly neighbours, the latter which political strategists have termed, "cousins of our nativity", I contend that eighteen years as editor of a Canadian Moving Picture trade paper, etc., etc., (you know what the etcetras stand for) should give me a sufficient authority to do some crowning.

However, with or without consent I have crowned a few in this Industry, crowned them in praise and crowned them in censure.

To return to "Henry VIII"; not to play this picture is to be out of Show Business. It is to be such a foolish exhibitor that even Ray Lewis cannot save him and what a little saviour I have been, and what a poor saver!

Then there is "Good Companions". Was it good? None better. Different, so different that it took you out of yourself into a new world, it reached out its hand and made you travel the road of companionship. It was like a bath in a spring, it was like Spring.

"Rome Express", another Gaumont-British gem, a perfect picture, which sped along the bed-rock of success, carrying exhibitors and the Gaumont-British trademark with it.

There were many other British successes, which Regal released, "The Wedding Rehearsal" of most pleasant memory, "There Goes The Bride", with that most charming actress, Jessie Matthews.

There was that ripping success, "Soldiers of the King", with Cicely Courtneidge and Edward Everett Horton.

In the Royal Group was also "Waltz Time in Vienna", with Evelyn Laye, and "After the Ball", with Esther Ralston and Basil Rathbone.

Regal's list of successes is such a long one that I could discourse on their merit from this Christmas into 1934; and therefore in order that there might be a brevity to my praise, and some praise for the wit of my brevity, let me say, that this year has been a whole year of successes for Regal Films; and conspicuous among the reasons for such success has been the most successful British pictures.

—Editor.

RKO--Cheerio!

I AM certain that RKO has felt this spirit of Cheerio ever since Katharine Hepburn captured her crown of stardom!

Despite the growth of the RKO's Production Department and its several outstanding successes, I cannot think of RKO without thinking of the Katharine Hepburn pictures. I had a hunch about Katharine Hepburn right at the beginning of her RKO career, when I first saw her with John Barrymore in "Bill of Divorcement". Despite the fact that the cameraman failed to make her anything but attractive, her ability made everything that was negative about her assume such an important angle, that it overcame all other handicaps and made Hepburn a star.

Then there was "Christopher Strong" in which Hepburn grew more attractive and more of a box-office value, when the die-hards began to sit up and take notice, conceding that she was a star.

Then came "Morning Glory", with all opposition fled and Katharine Hepburn looming as Katharine the Great.

"Little Women" adds another climax to a career of climaxes for Katharine Hepburn, and the prophecy of Mary Pickford comes true, namely, "Katharine Hepburn will take her place among the great stars of our screen". Count me in also, Katharine Hepburn, on this prophecy.

Ned Depinet and Jules Levy, Barret McCormick, will tell you that before there were prophets born for you, or profits born from you, the girl friend from Canada prophesied in your favor. So here is a Merry Christmas from me to you, and a cheerio to RKO which had the vision to carry on with you and for you.

"Little Women" shows that RKO knows its stars and showmanship. One swallow may not make a spring, but one star can make a few millions and a few millions can make the production of pictures a profitable investment.



The Gold Diggers of 1933

WHEN a company goes out of the red, the latter which spells a loss in millions, to register a profit of several hundred thousands, they deserve the title of "The Gold Diggers of 1933", and this does not mean the title of a Warner Bros. picture, but means The Warner Bros. in the flesh.

Good luck, Warner Bros., it's great to see you coming to the top, and riding Prosperity. No one can ever call Warner Bros. the playboys of this Industry. Among the veterans of the Screen, Warner Bros. have fought for their reputation and for their investment, for what they acquired in this Industry, and for an Industry of Showmen, even if it had to be minus the financiers. Your profits for the first quarter look great. As good as if they had been a million, and if you figure the losses of last year, this first quarter of this year's profits really figure in millions.

There is gold in Motion Pictures, take a look at Warner Bros., product this year and you need no further proof. "I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang", with Paul Muni, a masterful performance, of a masterful story. It made the people talk about Warner Bros., and it was the kind of talk which makes money talk.

"Forty-Second Street", another whirlwind of success with its box-office receipts wiping out deficits at a whirlwind speed.

"Gold Diggers of 1933", more gold for the Warners to dig into, and while these brothers of our Screen dig for themselves, they have an army of exhibitors to keep them company, the latter all intent on gold-digging for themselves.

"Footlight Parade" brings more success and more "gelt"; and not to overlook the less glamorous and glittering array of musical shows, the figure of "Voltaire", and George Arliss appears before me, with its contribution to the worthwhile pictures of this year's screen offerings.

Editor





Show Business



"Mystery of the Dead Police" Cast Completed

Henry Stevenson, well-known and benign-looking character actor, is signed to play the role of Sir Herbert Frenshen in M-G-M's forthcoming "Mystery of the Dead Police". He will be one of the "good" characters in a photoplay peopled with lurking, sinister beings of London's slums. Edgar Selwyn will direct from the sensational Crime Club novel by Philip MacDonald. Robert Montgomery is to star, while Elizabeth Allan has been awarded the feminine lead.

Frederic March will make "The Affairs of Cellini" as his first picture for the new Joseph M. Schenck-Darryl Zanuck company, 20th Century, instead of "Les Miserables" as previously announced.

Seldom has a picture attracted such a torrent of critical praise as did "Es-kimo", new Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer epic Arctic production which had its world premiere at Broadway's Astor Theatre recently.

Gloria Stuart will play the leading role in "The Countess of Monte Cristo", Carl Laemmle, Jr., announced last week. While this film is not essentially a musical production, it will give Miss Stuart a chance to sing again.

"Vanessa" to be New Hayes Vehicle Report from Coast

"Vanessa", Hugh Walpole's sensational novel and sequel to "The Fortress", may be a vehicle for Helen Hayes, it was disclosed last week at the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios, when Walter Wanger, producer, started preparations for transferring it to the screen.

"Little King" Does Christmas Special

Otto Soglow, creator of the famous "Little King", has drawn a special Christmas animated cartoon subject for RKO Van Beuren wherein the merry monarch becomes a good Samaritan with charitable purpose and comic effect.

Warner Bros. Make First Picture Deal with Russia

Vice-President Sam E. Morris, in charge of foreign sales for Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc., announces that Warner Bros. has concluded a deal with the Soviet Government for the release of American talking pictures in Russia. This is the first agreement of the kind to be concluded by any American firm.

"Heads We Go" Big Winner

"Heads We Go!" B.I.P. production, on its release in the Centre Theatre, Ottawa, is referred to by the Ottawa Journal as "a big winner, which filmgoers, who appreciate screen entertainment at its highest, should not fail to see."

Toronto Theatres

LOEW'S—Manager Jules Bernstein — "Should Ladies Behave", with Alice Brady and Lionel Barrymore, a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture.

IMPERIAL—Manager Jack Arthur — Ruth Chatterton in "Female", with George Brent, a Paramount production.

TIVOLI—Manager Alfred Sedgwick — "The Private Life of Henry VIII", held over 2nd week.

UPTOWN—Manager Tom Daley — Jack Hulbert and Cicely Courtneidge in "Falling For You", distributed through Regal Films.

SHEA'S—Manager Jerry Shea — The First National picture, "Goodbye Again", with Warren Williams and Joan Blondell.

Merry Christmas

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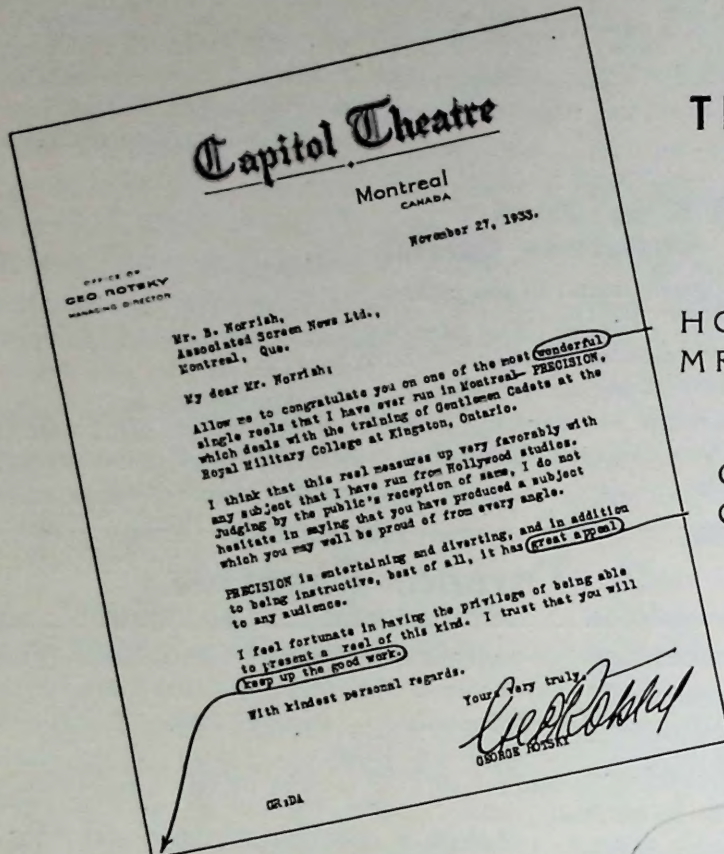
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